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T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

# GETTING RID OF FATHER

COMEDY SKETCH

BY

ARTHUR EDWARD WHITMAN



CHICAGO  
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS

lock is so aristocratic that one false move on your part would shock her completely.

JAMES. I haven't any dignity, but if you'll get me some I'll do the best I can with it.

BESSIE. Has the cook all arrangements complete for dinner?

JAMES (*dubiously*). I don't know, marm. She was just talking to (*the name of a local policeman*) the cop.

BESSIE. You go down and put him out. Tell her to start dinner at once.

JAMES (*eagerly*). You want me to put him out?

BESSIE. Yes, James, put him out.

JAMES (*rolling up sleeves*). Will I put him out. Leave him to me. (*Turns and starts to exit R.*)

BESSIE. James, my wraps. (*Points to wraps.*) Has the evening mail arrived?

JAMES (*taking wraps*). I think it has, marm.

BESSIE. Very well, you may bring it. (*Exit JAMES, R.*) BESSIE *takes chair at table.*) There (*sighs*), everything is arranged. I do hope Richard won't stay at the office until the last gun is fired. It always takes a man so long to dress, and they always wait until the last minute before they start.

*Enter JAMES, R., with letter on tray, which he passes to BESSIE.*

BESSIE. That is all for now, James. If I think of something I may have overlooked, I'll ring.

JAMES. And now I'm to put the cop out?

BESSIE. Yes, James. (*Exit JAMES, R.*) (BESSIE *opens letter and reads slowly.*) Why, this is from father. "Hardhit, Vt. Dear Daughter: Seeing as how things are kind of slow up here at Hardhit, I have decided to take a run down to Boston and make you a visit. I hope someone will meet me at the depot, as I ain't much acquainted down there, you know." I can hardly read this letter. Father always was a poor writer. "I remain, your loving father, Obadiah Sweetwater. P. S. I didn't mail this letter as soon as I expected on account of a big snowstorm, so I am mailing this the day I start." (*Excited.*) Good gracious! Father

is coming, and just at the wrong time. Oh, dear, what shall I do? What will the guests think of father? Why couldn't he have come at some other time? We shall never be able to break into society with father here. Oh, if Richard would only come home. Something will have to be done with father.

*Enter RICHARD, C., takes off hat and coat, hanging them on tree.*

RICHARD (*coming down to BESSIE*). Home on time.

BESSIE (*rising*). Oh, Richard! Our reception is spoiled.

RICHARD (*astonished*). How so?

BESSIE (*starting to cry*). Father is coming and will arrive tonight.

RICHARD. Your father?

BESSIE (*sobbing*). Y-e-s.

RICHARD. Why not have him stop at a hotel for to-night? Tell him we are crowded; we're taking boarders or running a hospital. Your father never could mix in society. He'd make more breaks in five minutes than a burglar would in a month.

BESSIE (*still sobbing*). I—I know he would, Richard, but you know it's father, and—well—I couldn't very well tell him we didn't want him.

RICHARD. But think of what it means to us. We are just breaking into society. What will the Rockerfolks and the Caterbilts think of your father? He would drive them into hysterics. Then they'll all leave, and our society aspirations will be but a dream.

BESSIE (*pleadingly*). What shall we do?

OBADIAH (*off stage*). That's all right. I can tend tew my own hat and coat. She knows I'm coming—right in this way.

BESSIE (*excited*). It's father! (RICHARD *falls in chair near table.*)

OBADIAH *enters C., with carpetbag, hatbox and umbrella, all of which he drops upon seeing BESSIE, rushes to embrace her.*

OBADIAH (*delighted*). Wal, here I be. (BESSIE holds her hand aloft in society fashion. OBADIAH hesitates, then reaches to shake her hand.) Gosh, I'm glad tew see yer.

BESSIE. And the same to you, father.

OBADIAH (*going to RICHARD, who rises slowly. Same business with shaking hands.*) And I am glad tew see you, Richard.

RICHARD. I assure you the pleasure is all mine, Mr. Sweetwater.

OBADIAH. I come durn nigh not a-findin' yer. Boston has grown some since I was a boy. I looked all around the depot, but I didn't see no one I knew, so I started out afoot.

RICHARD. Won't you remove your hat and coat, Mr. Sweetwater?

OBADIAH (*removing hat and coat during speech, which RICHARD takes and hangs on halltree, also places OBADIAH'S bag, etc., to one side of tree*). Yes, I guess I will. That feller down at the door wanted tew take them, but I wasn't taking any chances. What, is he boardin' with yer? Pretty polite, anyhow.

BESSIE (*sighing*). That was James, the butler.

OBADIAH (*recollecting*). Any relation tew them Butlers that used tew live over near Strawberry Hill?

BESSIE (*impatiently*). No, James works for us. He is our domestic servant.

OBADIAH. You mean your hired man, don't yer? Say, I come durn nigh fergettin' that I brought yer a pumpkin. You used tew be crazy fer pumpkin pies. Don't yer remember? (*Goes to bag, taking out pumpkin, which he starts to hand to BESSIE.*)

BESSIE (*taking OBADIAH by arm*). Come right in here, father. I'll show you where to put the pumpkin.

OBADIAH (*turning to RICHARD*). I'll be right back, Richard, and we'll have a little smoke talk. (*Exit BESSIE and OBADIAH, R.*)

RICHARD (*disgustingly*). He's here all right—pumpkin and all—and it looks like he intended to stay. (*Looks at watch.*) Two more hours and they'll all be here. (*Deter-*

*mined.)* It's no use; he has got to go, society must reign. I'll tell him we are taking boarders and get him a room at the hotel. (RICHARD exits C., hurriedly taking hat and coat.)

BESSIE and OBADIAH enter R.

OBADIAH. This place beats anything I ever saw all tew holler. It would make some folks up home sit up and open their eyes, I reckon: Things don't change much up our way, exceptin' the Billings kids all hed the measles tew once, and Bill Hayward's barn burned down.

BESSIE. Does Minnie Sprague still reside in Hardhit?

OBADIAH (*scrutinizing the furniture*). Yes, and I guess she always will if she's awaitin' fer some feller tew come along and carry her off. She's so durn homely now that she's afraid tew look in a glass. Say, dew yer have to pay yer taxes in Boston the minute yer get here? (OBADIAH takes chair to R. of table, BESSIE to L.)

BESSIE. Certainly not. Why do you ask?

OBADIAH (*drily*). Wal, the minute I got off the train a couple of fellers rushed up tew me and said, "Taxes." I said, "I guess not; I've paid my taxes down in Varmont."

BESSIE (*smiling*). Those were taxicab drivers.

OBADIAH. Wal, they didn't drive me anywheres. I started out afoot up tew Washington Street. I guess I must have resembled a charitable institution, because a feller come up and hit me up fer a quarter. Said he wanted tew get over tew Quincy, wherever that is. I give it tew him, but I kept my eye on him and ketched him aslidin' intew a barroom. I followed him in just in time tew see him take a drink. "Look here, young feller," says I, "I didn't give yer that money tew buy rum with. I thought you were a-goin' over tew Quincy?" He kinder laughed and said, "I am going. I've spent yer quarter fer two drinks, now I'm able tew walk over." That was a new one on me, so I got outer there mighty quick.

Enter RICHARD, C., comes down C.

RICHARD (*apologetically*). Mr. Sweetwater, your coming was somewhat unexpected. I don't know where we can put you to sleep. We really haven't a spare room left.

BESSIE. We are so sorry, father, but we are at present boarding the delegates from the Suffragette Convention.

OBADIAH. I don't care where I sleep, so long as I can get my boots and boiled collar off. What's them suffragettes anyway? Women that wanted tew be men, but didn't make up their minds soon enough?

BESSIE (*pleadingly*). But, father, they will all be gone tomorrow, and surely you wouldn't want to stay in a house with a crowd of women who talk about men and the high cost of living?

OBADIAH (*emphatically*). I never saw a woman that could scare me yet. I'm tew old a rooster tew let a crowd of old hens get the best of me. I'm goin' tew light up my pipe if yer don't care. (*Takes out pipe and tobacco, proceeding to fill the same.*)

RICHARD (*handing OBADIAH a cigar*). Have a cigar, Mr. Sweetwater.

OBADIAH (*taking cigar*). Don't care if I do. Say, I bet yer paid all of five cents fer this?

BESSIE (*rising, takes pipe from OBADIAH, placing it on table*). I shouldn't think you would smoke such old pipes, father.

OBADIAH (*drily*). There ain't nothin' very ancient about that pipe as I know on. If my memory is correct, I bought that pipe about the time you were married. But I'll keep this cigar, Richard, and when I get off the train down home I'll light her up. It will make them think I was some sport on my trip to Boston.

RICHARD. Did you ever stop at a hotel, Mr. Sweetwater? We had to do the best we could under the circumstances, therefore I stepped out and engaged a room for you.

OBADIAH (*with determination*). No, I never stopped at a hotel, and don't intend tew. Someone is always settin' them on fire, and half of the boarders don't get tew bed afore ten o'clock. (*Rising and goes toward halltree.*) I forgot tew show yer something. I didn't know but what yer might be havin' some swell times, so I fetched along my best hat. (*Takes old-fashioned tall hat from hatbox*)

*and puts it on.)* Hed it ever since I was married, but I never wore it only tew circuses, and once tew the County Fair. (*Replaces hat, coming down C.*)

BESSIE (*suppliantly*). Really, father, I cannot understand why you should have any objections to staying just one night in a hotel.

OBADIAH. Can't I sleep with the hired man? I guess I can get along all right if he don't snore tew much.

RICHARD (*astonished*). Why, the idea! We couldn't think of having one of our guests sleep with the butler. That would be ridiculous—wouldn't it, Bessie?

BESSIE. We never could listen to such a thing. In society guests are never in the company of servants.

OBADIAH (*starting to exit C.*). Yer hold on a minute. I'll go down and ask that feller if he's got any objections tew my bunkin' with him. (*OBADIAH exits C., RICHARD tries to detain him but fails. He comes back to BESSIE.*)

RICHARD (*looking at BESSIE in disgust*). Well, can you beat it? (*Takes out watch.*) Only an hour left. I'll go insane with him here, and the guests will think we have started an asylum after they hear him. We've got to get rid of him for tonight, but for heaven's sake what is the answer? He refuses to go to a hotel; he isn't afraid of women, and he wants to sleep with the butler. Imagine sleeping with a butler.

BESSIE (*desperately*). If something is to be done, it must be done at once.

*Enter OBADIAH, C., coming down C.*

OBADIAH. I just saw that feller and he said I could bunk with him if I wanted tew. (*Telephone rings off stage, R.*)

BESSIE. The 'phone is ringing, I'll answer it, Richard. (*BESSIE exits R.*)

RICHARD (*to OBADIAH, who has taken a chair at L. of table*). I don't think, Mr. Sweetwater, that it would be perfectly safe to allow you to sleep with our butler. We have discovered very recently that he has violent crazy spells at times. These spells always appear at night. He has even torn up some of the bed clothing during these out-

breaks, and as soon as I can engage another man I shall discharge him.

*Enter BESSIE, R.*

BESSIE. There is someone on the 'phone who wishes to speak with you, Richard. (*Exit RICHARD, R.*)

OBADIAH (*drily*). Your husband was just a-tellin' me that yer hired man has got an empty place up in his hayloft.

BESSIE (*surprised*). We haven't any hayloft.

OBADIAH. I mean he goes outer his head at spells.

BESSIE (*grasping the point and carries it along*). Yes, he has acted very queer of late.

OBADIAH. Wal, there ain't no need of my sleeping with him, 'cause he told me there was a spare room that no one used.

BESSIE. Now that is just how crazy he acts. He knows every sleeping room is at present occupied.

OBADIAH (*rising slowly*). Maybe he is crazy, but if I'm any judge of human nature, he's got all his buttons left yet. I'm the one that has been a fool not tew see yer didn't want me tew stay here. Wal, yer needn't think up any more excuses, 'cause I won't bother you any longer. (*Solemnly*) Maybe I ain't so stuck up as them society folks yer have come visitin' yer, and maybe there is some hayseed in my hair. But the time ain't come yet when I'd turn my own relation outer doors tew dump in a load of fashion plates that are so durn lazy they can't clean their own teeth.

RICHARD *enters R. in time to hear the last of OBADIAH's speech. He stands in entrance while OBADIAH starts to exit C.*

BESSIE. You're not going, father?

OBADIAH (*judicially*). Yer bet I be. I'm going back tew Varmont, where you can smoke corncob pipes, say any durn thing yer like, and sleep with the hired man if yer want tew. (*OBADIAH goes to halltree and puts on hat and coat.*)

RICHARD (*coming down to BESSIE*). Has he discovered?

BESSIE. Yes, the butler gave it all away.

RICHARD (*excited*). I'm in a terrible fix. I was just

talking with Barker from the Club. They are arranging for a big time, and he wanted to know if it would be all right to draw a check for a thousand dollars. Now I've borrowed the thousand to use for our reception. What can I tell him? (*OBADIAH, who has finished putting on his coat, stands listening at C. entrance.*) I'm the treasurer of the Club and I couldn't say the money wasn't in the bank. I intended to return it before they would need it. What shall I do?

BESSIE (*wildly*). Oh, Richard, what did you do it for?

OBADIAH (*coming down C., speaking benignly*). Excuse me, but I thought before I went that I had ought tew ask yer tew come up tew Varmont. There's always a welcome on the doormat, and yer kin come just as long as there is a roof over the old homestead. (*To RICHARD.*) And seein' as how yer are a little hard up fer money, I didn't come down here broke. Yer just hold on a minute. (*Sits in chair at table, removes one boot, taking from same a large roll of bills; replaces boot and rises.*) There, that is all I've got with me, but maybe it will tide yer over fer a spell. (*Hands the roll to RICHARD.*)

RICHARD. Mr. Sweetwater, I couldn't think of taking that money.

OBADIAH. I guess yer better, 'cause maybe yer need it.

RICHARD (*taking money*). Mr. Sweetwater, I don't know how to thank you.

OBADIAH. If yer don't know—why—just keep it to yerself. Wal, I'm goin' now, so I'll bid yer both good-bye.

BESSIE. You're not going, father?

RICHARD (*pleadingly*). Why, no, Mr. Sweetwater. We couldn't think of your going at this time. (*RICHARD and BESSIE remove OBADIAH's hat and coat.*)

BESSIE. Now, father, sit right down here, while I get your pipe. (*They put OBADIAH in chair by fireplace. BESSIE gets his pipe from table and places it in his mouth. RICHARD lights the same.*) The idea of you wanting to go

home, father. (BESSIE and RICHARD *sit on the arms of the chair.*)

RICHARD. You'll stay, won't you, Mr. Sweetwater?

OBADIAH (*puffing at pipe*). Wal—if yer want me tew—  
maybe I will. (*Cracking his heels together.*) I always did  
want tew get intew society.

SLOW CURTAIN.

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Patsy O'Wang, 35 min. . . . .	4 3
Pat, the Apothecary, 35 min. . . . .	6 2
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Si and I, 15 min. . . . .	1
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Street Faker, 15 min. . . . .	3
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